

Correspondence.

"CLASSIC AND CHRISTIAN."

"At vestri proavi Plautinus et numero et
Landaver stultis; nimium patienter utrumque,
Ne dicam stultis, mirati; si modo ego, et vos
Scimus inarborum lepido seponere dicto,
Legitimumque sonum digitis callemus et aure."
Horatius, De Arti Poetica, 270.

SIR,—One of the curses of our profession is the ease with which a smattering in technicalities is acquired; and the manner in which we are bored by the use of them by quacks and their superficial followers. It seldom, however, happens that these worthies have either time or head-piece enough to acquire any information about more than one style of architecture; this they laud to the very skies, and pour all sorts of contempt upon every other. Thus some time ago the Adam's style was all the rage, and your "men of true taste" would have square and oval tablets, with vases and festoons on them, stuck up everywhere. Then at another period every thing must be Greek; we had the honey-suckle and lotus in every enrichment; huge, fat, gouty columns at every door; and the lantern of Demosthenes formed the model for every thing it could be tortured into, even down to a cast-iron parish pump.

We are not all deaf, and so cannot do like Sir Joshua Reynolds,

"When they talked of their Raphael, Correggio, and stuff,

He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff."

If, however, we escape the hearing nonsense, we cannot escape it in print.

The cant now-a-days is all about "Early English," and "Perpendicular," "Gargoyles," and "Lychnoscopes," "Easter Sepulchres," and "Parvieses," and, though the churches produced under such auspices (as may be expected) are profoundly below contempt, one thing is sure, if the school cannot produce any thing decent, they can produce every thing that has been done before them.

Now it requires some ingenuity to attack what is acknowledged to be classic, in either painting, poetry, music, or architecture. An *habitué* of the opera, who has not an idea beyond Donizetti or Mercadante, would not like Handel's "Israel in Egypt," or Beethoven's "Symphony in C Minor," but he would be puzzled how to criticise them. However, a bold assumption of taste will do very much. So, about sixty years ago there was a great rage for old ballads, and the "men of true taste" used to exalt "Lord Thomas and fair Elinor" above Virgil and Horace. So, in 1843, brick-and-a-half Gothic is vastly preferred to the Parthenon, or Pantheon, to St. Peter's or St. Paul's; and the *Ecclesiologist* is far better authority than Vitruvius. Palladio, Jones, Wren, or Stuart. Now, among many other vagaries, one of the most extraordinary is to make out that no architecture can be Christian, and no Christian church can be built in the present day, save and except the aforesaid stock-brick-Gothic; and we have in No. 33 an indignant letter from Mr. G. R. Lewis (dated at full length) 61, Upper Norton-street, Portland-place, London, against every body who shall dare to design a church in the classic style. It is true you have given Mr. G. R. Lewis a gentle rap over the knuckles with your editorial ruler, but perhaps you will oblige me by asking a few questions before you administer, as I hope you will, a little more gentle correction to him and his friends.

In what style were the early Christian churches erected before Constantine (for there were many churches built, some of which were demolished, some merely shut up by Severus and Dioclesian)? Were not those churches probably built in the same styles as the Temples of Jupiter, Vesta, or the Sybil, and were they not nevertheless Christian churches?

Mr. G. R. Lewis tells us that "the words 'classic style' imply the Greek style (!) when the Greeks were Pagans!!" Is not the Roman style classic as well as the Greek? Were not Virgil and Livy as much classic authors, as Homer and Herodotus? and Vitruvius as much a classic architect as Callimachus? and was not the classic style used by the Christians many years after both Romans and Greeks ceased to be Pagans?

When Constantine became Christian, did he not immediately erect many Christian churches in Rome (and between twenty and thirty in Constantinople), some of which, as Santa Croce, San Giovanni Laterano, San Paolo fuori le mura, San Lorenzo fuori le mura, &c. &c. are now in existence, and are they not all classic churches?

Was not the principle upon which the first Christian churches were erected not that of the temple, but of the classic Roman Basilica? and is there any sort of record of any other style of churches for many centuries?

Have you not as much right to call the of works

Cyprian and Minucius Felix, of Athanasius and Chrysostom, Pagan works, because they are written in Latin and Greek, as to call these Pagan churches upon the dictum, forsooth, that classic is not Christian?

Were not all Christian edifices constructed in the classic style for nearly six centuries?

Were not all Christian edifices constructed in the classic style, or in imitations of it, gradually debased to the Byzantine, Romanesque, and other similar styles, for at least five centuries more?

Was there any building in what Mr. G. R. Lewis is pleased to call the "Christian style" till at least eleven or twelve centuries of the Christian era had rolled away? and is not the former period usually considered that of the primitive or pure church, and the latter era that of corruptions?

Supposing an order given to an architect to build a church as like a primitive Christian church as possible, would it be right to build it in a classic or Gothic style?

And lastly, will you ask Mr. G. R. Lewis by what special inspiration it is, that to him alone it should be reserved to point out the "true principles of designing the house of prayer religiously," and is he not rather unkind to the profession, where so much information is needed, in sternly resolving "not to state the matter over again at this time?"

I am, Mr. Editor, your sincere admirer,
AN OLD-FASHIONED ARCHITECT.
September 26, 1843.

SIR,—There are several little matters upon which I have for some time been thinking of addressing you; should you, therefore, find this, my first communication, to be somewhat of a rambling nature, I must trust to the kindness always hitherto exhibited in your writings to excuse me.

I will first, in all sincerity and candour, state the impression made on my mind by different numbers of THE BUILDER, not by way of criticism, but because I know that in able hands the slightest hints are sometimes worked out so as to produce the greatest benefits.

In your second number I find it stated that, "we have charged ourselves to enter upon the investigation and elucidation of the character and principles of Gothic Architecture." It is now thirty weeks since you thus published your intention, and I have so long waited patiently, in hopes of seeing the promise fulfilled, but now begin to despair (if the elucidation is continued at the same rate as hitherto) of ever living to see it fully carried out. I sincerely trust that you will, as early as you conveniently can, proceed with the work, for I conceive it to be one calculated to be of the greatest service to your readers generally. I find in No. 3 a circular window from the church of St. Owen, and also chimney-shafts from Hampton Court Palace. I should have been much pleased to have seen them accompanied by sections of the ribs, &c., of the window, and plans of the shafts. I think that sections of mouldings from foreign examples would be very useful in comparing the peculiar phases of the Gothic architecture of our continental neighbours, particularly if the date of the erection could be attached.

In No. 5, I find you advocate the establishment of trade guilds. This important subject I hope to see repeatedly pressed upon the notice of all persons in any way connected with building, for I feel confident that it is one which will require your best energies, assisted by those of your most talented contributors, to bring to a successful issue. Would it not be advisable, as early as possible, to lay before your readers a definite plan of procedure, and invite discussion on the different points? Unless something of this kind is done, I fear no beneficial result will be effected.

I now come to a subject (viz. seeking for employment) which I think every well-wisher to his race must thank you for having taken up in the spirit you have done; but I am, at the same time, much surprised that greater advantage has not been taken of your kindness in opening the columns of THE BUILDER to employment-seekers for a display of the peculiar talents they may possess. That there are no persons to whom your benevolent offer would be a benefit I cannot believe. That they are all of the diffident and humble class you allude to in page 83, who fear that their productions are unworthy a niche in the edifice you are erecting, I cannot believe, although I am aware that diffidence is a very general accompaniment of talent, and that the study of the fine arts is one not at all calculated to bring a man to that state in which it is said that "impudence and ignorance go together."—a state which often advances the worldly prosperity of its possessor far beyond that which is to be obtained by the greatest talents when clogged by diffidence. I would, therefore, beg those who are prevented by *mauvaise honte* from availing themselves of the opportunity now presented to them, to cast off at least a portion of it, if possible, and recollect that their talent must not

be laid up in a napkin; and though they be only possessed of one talent, an enlarged, comprehensive, and candid criticism, such as I hope shortly to see on the various designs contained in THE BUILDER, will be one of the best means of adding another to it. We do not expect to receive interest for gold locked up in a coffer. I trust you will not complain of my dwelling so long on this subject, as I can assure you that it is one upon which I write feelingly, having had particular friends of my own who, after in vain seeking for employment for several months, one upwards of eighteen, have at last been compelled to take to an entirely different mode of gaining a livelihood—for where had they an opportunity of exhibiting their talents?—who had they to advocate their cause? I hope and trust that this will no longer be the case, but that all such may long continue to receive the support and advice of THE BUILDER, and that they will strenuously support THE BUILDER in return, though it be merely from gratitude.

In connection with the above subject, I observe a letter from Mr. James Wyllson, Secretary to the B. A. A. D., stating that the society keep a register of those architectural draughtsmen who may be in want of an engagement. From the title British Association, I presume that it is intended to consist of members in all parts of the kingdom: if so, I beg to suggest whether it would not be advantageous to the society, and also to "all whom it may concern," if the association would insert an advertisement in THE BUILDER, comprising the whole of the rules of the association, as I feel confident that many societies of the kind fail from a want of a knowledge of the advantages to be derived from them being made sufficiently public, and few like to become members of a society without first being made acquainted with the laws by which they are to be governed. From the little knowledge to be derived from Mr. Wyllson's letter, it appears to me that the B. A. A. D. is one deserving the support of every member of the profession.

I have been much gratified with the various diagrams that have from time to time appeared, and hope many young members of the profession will perceive the great benefit to be derived from exercising their abilities in this way, recollecting Byron's maid, who

"—taught so well,
That she by teaching learned herself to spell."

I think you would be conferring a great favour upon competing architects if you could publish the approved designs in cases of competition, as I know that many disappointed competitors feel very much disposed to think (and perhaps not altogether without reason) that an undue advantage is sometimes taken of their designs without any acknowledgment. By publishing in THE BUILDER the approved design, the various competitors would have an opportunity of comparing it with their own, and should they find that they have been unfairly treated, I doubt not but your love of justice would allow them an opportunity of placing the two designs in juxtaposition, which mode of proceeding would, I imagine, prove a great check upon all parties engaged, as their conduct would be under the cognizance of the whole of the building world.

I shall now refer to what is perhaps the main cause of my troubling you with this long and hastily-written letter viz. your Leader in No. 31; I find it there stated, that in Manchester, Liverpool, and doubtless it is the same in a degree in other places, that you found THE BUILDER comparatively unknown. One reason for this, I think, is that a very great majority of those who would be subscribers for the paper obtain their periodicals, &c. from newsmen who generally receive their parcels from London before THE BUILDER is published (at least I am so informed), so that any person who orders the unstamped edition does not get it until it is nearly a week old; I find it so myself; this occasionally takes off part of the interest, for though THE BUILDER is not a newspaper, there is something of the same feeling of expectation attending it, something akin to the feeling we experience on breaking the seal of a long-expected letter: "hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" this may prevent orders from those who would be subscribers, and I think certainly would prevent orders from newsmen for a chance sale. If you could get THE BUILDER ready for the country parcels, in the same manner as other papers, I think good would result therefrom. In the same article I see you propose having provincial editors; I do not exactly understand your plan, whether you would have one in each considerable town, one in each county, or whether you would apportion out districts for each; however it may be, I think that the idea, if well carried out, will be a great means of extending the circulation, usefulness, and interest of THE BUILDER. In this part of the country I should think Birmingham would be a good post for an editor. I am quite aware that you have correspondents in this place, it may therefore appear superfluous in me to